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NAWG Board Votes to Advocate for Biomass Growers

The National Association of Wheat Growers' Board of Directors voted unanimously Wednesday to expand the association's advocacy function to include biomass crops.

NAWG has undertaken this effort primarily because energy crop growth could provide significant economic benefits to wheat growers, improving their financial position and allowing them to provide both wheat and biomass to the market.

"Increasing fuel costs have caused all Americans to become more interested in renewable fuels," said Dale Schuler, NAWG president. "We hope that wheat growers will be able to participate in the production of biomass crops to supply feedstock for the fuel that is needed by our nation, while also providing economic benefit for our growers."

Wheat straw is seen as the most favorable feedstock for cellulosic ethanol by many in this growing industry, including Iogen, a NAWG Foundation Development Committee member. Providing additional biomass through the production of dedicated energy crops could potentially lead to \$40 billion in additional farm income, 600,000 new rural jobs and enhanced U.S. energy security.

"Biofuels from biomass is an emerging multi-billion dollar market opportunity that will offer significant benefits to the rural economy," stated Richard Hamilton, CEO of Ceres, a leading developer of dedicated energy crops. "As the technologies for conversion of biomass mature and become economically competitive, we believe that dedicated energy crops will provide a great opportunity for farmers. The establishment of a growers association is a major step towards realizing this potential."

This new function will allow NAWG to represent growers as the cellulosic ethanol industry emerges, including working with Congress and the Administration on policies that favor the production of cellulosic ethanol and serving as an information conduit between biomass growers and the cellulosic ethanol industry.

"We at Iogen are delighted that NAWG has taken this step to represent the interests of U.S. biomass growers," said Jeff Passmore, Iogen's executive vice president. "We, as industry, see a real and early need to have a major grower organization focus on this agriculture activity."

"As the cellulosic ethanol industry matures in a very few years, we also foresee major new opportunities for existing and future NAWG members. We look forward to an even closer relationship with your association in coming years."

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